

# THE LOVE OF A CALIBAN;

A Romantic Opera in One Act.

By ELIA W. PEATTIE.



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**A Romantic Opera in One Act,**  
**By ELIA W. PEATTIE.**

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Of this edition of *The Love of a Caliban*,  
but three hundred copies were made, and of  
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# THE LOVE OF A CALIBAN.

*A Romantic Opera in One Act.*

## CHARACTERS;

The Lord Pietro, *Doge of Venice*;

The Lord Ascanio, *Suitor to Lucrezia*;

Massimiliano, *Jester to Pietro*;

The Lady Lucrezia, *Daughter to Pietro*;

The Lady Marguerita, *Companion to Lucrezia*.

## SCENE;

Venice, in the XVth Century.





## NOTE.



WITHOUT doubt, the success of this little opera would depend upon two things; first, the beauty of the melody of Massimilliano's song, which should run through overture, interlude and finale, and which should be at once passionate and delicate in its character, and second, the ability of the singer playing Massimilliano to act well. He should be a good comedian, and his actions throughout the opera should be grotesque and absurd, never conveying a hint of the pride and ambition, not to say the suffering, which he finally shows in the last scene. He should be capable, during the last scene, between his entrance and his tragic moment, of diverting the audience with comical tricks, which must be the outcome of his personality, and can not well be set down for an actor.

The lines might have been written in rhyme, but it seemed better and more natural to put most of them in rhythm.

*E. W. P.*



## SCENE FIRST.

A lady's luxurious boudoir, with a very wide and deep window at the rear, showing a view of the Grand Canal at night, with lights on it. The boudoir has many flowers in it, and palms, and statues, but no pictures. Couches, silken pillows, low chairs, mirrors, rugs and draperies of rich colors make up the furnishings. The room is lit—ostensibly—by lamps of antique and curious shapes which stand upon the tables and the floor.

The stage is vacant upon the rising of the curtain. From without comes the splash of water from a passing gondola, and a gondolier's voice is heard singing :





YOU can tell by the moon when the storm will  
rise;

You can read her mood in my lady's eyes.

My lady hath less love than hate.

But I like a stormy sea—eh, mate?

A wind that wails and a sea that pounds—

Eh, mate? A surf that thunders and drowns!

Aye mate! And I love a lady's hate.

The song becomes fainter at each line, and is never  
loud. It dies away. Voices are heard without on the  
Canal, accompanied by the splashing of water.

*First Voice;* The moon does not rise till late to-night.

*Second Voice;* It's black enough now for the Devil to  
be abroad without being recognized.

*First Voice;* Why art thou always thinking of the  
Devil?

*Second Voice;* By St.Peter, neighbour, it is only when  
I am with thee!

It is not necessary that these remarks should be intelli-  
gible upon the stage, and, indeed it will be better if they  
are not. But the usual "murmur" of the stage is too  
obviously not conversation. Therefore it is always better  
to say actual words, though the import is not heard.

A short silence.

*A Cry Out on the Canal;* Whither away!

Enter the Lady Marguerita. Sings:



HE flowers he gave me are faded and dead;  
So I pluck no roses a' gleam with the dew,  
For he lies out there in his ocean bed,  
And I wear the dead flowers for my lover true.

Enter Lord Pietro.

*Pietro* Art thou alone? Pray tell me where my daughter is.

*Marguerita* Most excellent Signor, I do await her here myself.

*Pietro* I have not seen her since last night. I think, Marguerita, that my daughter broods on something she does not tell me of.

*Marguerita* Dost think, my lord, she hath a grief?

*Pietro* I fear 'tis so. Can you not persuade her to confide her grief to you?

*Marguerita* She wraps herself in silence like a cloak.

*Pietro* Aye, so she does. But any woman baffles me. I understand the way to guide a state. But the more I study women the less I know of them.

*Marguerita* Here comes Lucrezia.

Lucrezia enters, crosses to her father, kisses his hand and touches her friend in a friendly way in passing. Her manner is dignified and stately. She has no quick movements. There is nothing coquettish about her.

*Pietro,* Where hast thou been my child? How hast thou spent the day?

*Lucrezia,* In longing for the night.

*Pietro,* Why should'st thou weary for the night? I thought youth loved the day.

*Lucrezia,* And so it may. But melancholy thoughts thrive best at night.

*Pietro,* Thought! Thou talkest like a professor more than a woman. At thine age I concerned myself much more with action than with thought.

*Lucrezia,* Action? I am a woman! I can do nothing for the world.

*Marguerita,* You make it more beautiful.

*Pietro,* Care you nothing for that? I heard you say one day you were content to live only to see how beautiful the world could grow.

*Lucrezia,* Did I say so? Why yes, beauty I know is the sole medium for truth. At least for truth that can appeal to me. I know not right from wrong myself. These things may change. But beauty I do know. It comes from heaven. And nothing can be good which is not beautiful.

During the last sentence Massimiliano enters and stands unobserved. He is much stooped, with a large head hanging almost on his breast. His face is distorted, he limps, and has a furtive way of lifting his eyes. He comes forward laughing harshly.

*Massimilliano* How, then, must the noble lady admire me!

All laugh indulgently.

*Pietro* Thou handsome fellow! Dost thou never knock? Hast leave to enter a lady's room in this fashion?

*Massimilliano* Dost a dog knock, my lord? I am refused admittance nowhere—except heaven.

*Pietro* Then wilt thou also escape the pangs of hell. If thou hast no privilege thou wilt have no punishment.

*Massimilliano* Is it so? Then divine law is different from human. For we have no rewards for virtue although we have grim punishment for vice.

Lucrezia throws herself on a couch and fans herself languidly. Marguerita sits beside her.

*Lucrezia* Waste no words on this rattler, I beg. He has stood too long in the sun and turned sour.

*Massimilliano* My lady is the sun of Venice. How should her favour turn me sour?

*Pietro* Enough, fool. Lucrezia, I bring thee here to-night, the Lord Ascanio. He has come to ask me for thy hand. What answer wilt thou give?

Massimilliano has been lying upon the floor near Lucrezia, looking at her intently. Now he springs up, seizes a bunch of flowers she has in her hand, and hurls them to the floor.



*All,* What is it?

*Massimiliano,* A tarantula! A tarantula!

*Lucrezia,* Fool! There was no tarantula. Dost call this a jest?

*Massimiliano,* (*Laughing satirically.*) Dost the lady think she can see all of the dangers that surround her? It takes a prophetic eye to do that. Whence came these flowers?

*Marguerita,* From the Lord Ascanio.

*Massimiliano,* I thought as much. It was a tarantula in the leaves, my lady.

Exit Pietro. Massimiliano sings:



He gave her a purse and a noble name;

Why does the lady weep so?

He gave her land and he gave her fame;

Why does the lady weep?

Highest of all the dames was she;

Why does the lady weep so?

"The grave is the only place for me;"

Thus did the lady weep.

*Marguerita,* Silence! Thou croakest like a frog.

Lucrezia regards the Jester intently and sadly as if his words disturbed her. She rises quickly as her father enters accompanied by Lord Ascanio. During the exchange of salutations, Massimiliano makes a grotesque imitation of them.

*Massimilliano*, I beg the pardon of the honorable company. But I can bow no lower. My grace was so great the first time I ever made a salute to a lady that I have never been allowed to rise.

*Marguerita*, And who was the lady, fool?

*Massimilliano*, The only one who knows the value of silence—the most prolific of her sex—the mother of us all—Earth.

*Ascanio*, Lady Lucrezia, dost thou know my errand?

*Lucrezia*, I have been told it Lord Ascanio, by my father and I thank thee for the honour bestowed.

*Massimilliano to Marguerita*, How dry words crackle.

*Ascanio*, Lady, I can not keep from loving thee. If it be an honour it is one I yield perforce.

*Pietro to Lucrezia*, What answer hast thou?

*Lucrezia*, Father, I will tell thee and this gentleman the truth. I have not seen the man I love.

*Ascanio*, Thou sendest me away?

*Lucrezia*, I said not so.

*Pietro*, My child!

*Ascanio*, Lady Lucrezia!

*Lucrezia*, Listen to me. I think I love. But then I know not whom it is I love. I think that he loves me. Yet know I not his name, nor how his face looks, nor his rank or worthiness.

*Pietro*, These riddles are unworthy of my daughter.

*Lucrezia*, Pardon me. I mean no disrespect to thee nor to this gentle lord. I can not tell thee what I mean—not now. To-morrow night, since thou art pleased to set a *fete* forth for me in celebration of my natal day, I will unravel this perplexing tangle, if you please. Until then, Lord Ascanio, thy love, if love it be, must wait.

*Ascanio*, If love it be Thou canst not doubt my love?

*Lucrezia*, How should I know what love is like, my lord?

Quintette in which Lucrezia, Marguerita, Pietro and Ascanio sing in harmony, Massimiliano singing in caricature, his tone and manner at variance with the others, being farcical and bitter. All sing:

The Love  
Of a Caliban



OW does love come?

Is it with banners?

Is he wreathed like a victor with laurel and  
bay?

*Massimiliano;* Love is blind and he walks this way,  
(*Groping and limping.*)

*All;* Time is a captive lashed to his chariot wheels,

*Massimiliano;* And folly comes comes dangling along after  
his heels.

His garments are tinted with purple and rose,

And laughter re-echoes wherever he goes.

How does love come? Love? Bah!

*All;* Love comes with banners,

*Massimiliano;* How does love come? Ha! ha! ha! ha!

*All;* His song is the sweetest the weary world hath,

And roses all perfumed, spring up in his path,

*Massimiliano;* Love? Ha! ha! ha! ha!

*Ascanio;* Lady Lucrezia, to-morrow night! (*Bows, exit.*)

The Love  
Of a Caliban

*Pietro to Marguerita;* Said I not all women were a mystery? (*Exit.*)

*Marguerita;* Dear Lucrezia, hast prepared for the *fete* to-morrow night?

*Lucrezia;* I am always prepared for a *fete* Marguerita. It is only a funeral that would find me unprepared.

*Massimilliano;* And yet one is sure of funerals, and never of *fetes*.

*Marguerita;* With thy permission I will seek my room. May I send thy maid to thee?

*Lucrezia;* No, no, not now! Go to thy bed dear Marguerita. And sleep a dreamless sleep.

*Massimilliano;* Lady, pray let her dream while she is sleeping if she can. She hath not wit enough to dream waking dreams.

*Marguerita;* Lucrezia, thou givest that fellow too much liberty. Good-night.

*Exit.* Lucrezia throws herself upon the sofa, with her feet still touching the floor. Massimilliano sits upon the floor at her feet.

The Love  
Of a Caliban

*Massimilliano*, Princes have been here before me.

*Lucrezia*, A prince is no more than any other man, good fool. He has but two eyes, a mouth, two ears and a tongue. It is no argument to me to call a man a prince.

*Massimilliano*, Lady dost ever go to confession?

*Lucrezia*, Faithfully. Why dost thou ask?

*Massimilliano*, I thought that if the lady did not I would ask her to take me for a father confessor.

*Lucrezia*, Dost think I could get good advice from thee?

*Massimilliano*, The lady could get something better. She could get allegories. I noticed a while ago that she was interested in allegories.

*Lucrezia*, I have a question to ask thee, wiseacre. Which is the most precious of our senses? That which lets us see, taste, hear, smell or touch?

*Massimilliano*, Surely, that which lets us see the faces of our enemies.

*Lucrezia*, I should have said myself that I would rather lose any dear sense I have than that of sight. But listen, fool. Hearing is the most precious thing we have. 'Tis sound alone that can transport the soul beyond mere earthly things and fill it with a sense ineffable.

*Massimilliano*, Why dost the lady say this?

Lucrezia leans forward, and idly picks up the fool's bells  
toying with them as she talks.

*Lucrezia*, Because a voice alone hath taught me how to feel. Fool, tho' thou givest, thou art a true friend of mine. So I will tell to thee a secret on which my soul feeds night and day. And thou shalt tell me what to do. Listen—night after night, for all the summer past, below my window, hidden in the shade, there sings a voice. Man there may be with it, but never have I laid one glance on him.

Massimiliano falls forward on the floor, resting his head upon his hands and looking at her covertly.

*Massimiliano*, The voice—what was it like?

*Lucrezia*, What is it like? Like the dear echo of my secret soul!

Massimiliano looks straight at her for a moment, and then bursts into a fit of laughter. Suddenly he stops, and looking at her angrily, snatches the bells from her.

*Massimiliano*, Give me my bells! I have nothing but my foolcraft! Wilt thou take that from me? Thou hast no right to come to me for aught but folly. A friend of thine? Not so. I am the fool.

He starts to go out, then returns.

*Massimiliano*, And so the voice was like the echo of thy secret soul?

Bursts into another fit of laughter and exits, singing "How does love come? Love! Bah!"

Lucrezia sits still for a few moments. From out on the Canal come voices and the splashing of water.

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Of a Caliban

*First Voice,* The palace is dark.

*Second Voice,* All but the light in the Lady Lucrezia's window.

*First Voice,* She has a *fete* to-morrow given for her birthday by the Doge.

*Second Voice,* They say she is to wear the family jewels. 'T will be the first time that they have been worn since she was born. Their sparkle has been hidden in the iron coffers of the Doge.

Lucrezia arises and paces the floor with her head in an attitude of thought. She goes to the window and looks out. Silence for a few seconds.

*Lucrezia,* This silence is a bubble I would burst. Where is the voice? When will he come? The day has seemed so long. Foolish maid to live but for a voice!





WHEN of war it sings,  
I feel my spirit swell,  
And in my sense there rings  
The awful din of war's relentless hell;  
Hero am I, and unafraid of death;  
And life a thistle, to be blown with idle breath.

Of love it sings,  
And then myself I yield  
To fancies light as wings  
Of butterflies in summer-flowered field;  
And sweet as honey that the wild bee sips,  
Are fancied kisses raining on my lips.

She pauses and listens. There is a slight noise under  
the window, and Massimiliano sings :



*Pietro,* I greet you with all courtesy. The occasion is auspicious, and celebrates a joyous day. For now my daughter enters into her estate, full mistress of herself, a woman now, and done with all the chaste seclusion of a maid.

The Love  
Of a Caliban

*Chorus:—*



UNCHANTED are the fields a maiden walks,  
There Cupid's poppies grow and scatter sleep,  
Youth plucks the thorns from off the roses' stalks,  
And sweet illusions all the senses steep.

And now from out these pleasure-haunted fields,  
Our lady comes with shy yet stately tread.  
What can we else but full allegiance yield  
To womanhood's sweet crown upon her head?

After the singing of the chorus, which occupies several minutes, a part of the company form for the dancing of the Saraband. The musicians appear upon the stage, and Mas-similiano emerges from a bass viol. Throughout the dance he indulges in grotesque mimicry. This stately dance proceeds with appropriate orchestration, and at its conclusion a train of maidens enter, dressed in white, and carrying many flowers, accompanying the Lady Lucrezia, who is dressed in white satin embroidered in gold, with girdle and coronet of jewels. The Doge descends and leads her to the chair beside his own. The maidens group themselves about her. During the singing of the following chorus, as well as the preceding one, the singers should stand in casual and natural groups, and not as choruses usually do. It may be necessary for the various parts to be in proximity, but they need not to be in rows.

*Chorus* :—



WOMANHOOD won is a fair crown of glory,  
In reverent joy will we chant its praise.  
Oh! still may it be the chief charm of story;  
Still fire the theme of the poet's lays.

*Lucrezia* : I thank you for your greeting. Yes, sweet is womanhood, sweet its knowledge, sweet its friendships, and sweet its very griefs. Sweet too, its love, which is both joy and grief. And here to-night, I come to test the meaning of that love, half-known to me, and dimly understood.

*Pietro* : My daughter, what dost thou mean? I can not guess the import of thy words.

*Lucrezia* : Fear not my father, that I will do aught to shame these guests or thee.

*Pietro* : Speak on. Explain the meaning.

*Lucrezia*—



UT this I mean. I pray of him,  
Who nightly sings his songs to me,  
Beneath my window's shaded rim,  
To tell his name and his degree.

Never had maid a tale so strange,  
Never did maid make such a choice,  
For though my heart can never change,  
Yet that I love is but a voice.  
And if among these gentle lords,  
There any be my hand would plight,  
Whose singing with my heart accords,  
Then he may have my troth to-night.

*Ascanio*, My lady, thou playest me false! Had I not thy  
promise for to-night? Wert thou not to give me my answer?

*Lucrezia*, It is given. If thou can'st prove to me that  
thou art he who nightly sings when all the rest are still, and  
who awakens my dull heart to happiness and life, then I am  
thine, Ascanio, to the end.

ye Love  
F a Caliban

*Ascanio,* I do not think thou makest honorable answer.

*Lucrezia,* Yet if thou provest the voice is thine, I will make thee an honorable wife, Ascanio.

*There is a pause.*

*Marguerita,* No one comes to joust in this strange tournament.

*Pietro,* Are there none here who dare lay claim to be singers?

*Lucrezia (sadly,)* Many there be here who can sing. But which of them can sing my soul away?

Massimiliano has been sitting on the steps of the dais, smirking and whispering with the courtiers. While Lucrezia sang he lay flat, playing softly with his bells, and looking at them as if he were conscious of nothing else. Now suddenly, he springs before the dais, flings away his bells, and cries:

*Massimiliano,* The voice is mine.

All laugh in derision. Lucrezia looks at him angrily.

*Lucrezia,* I'll not forgive thee for a jest to-night. Be gone, friend fool! Another time I'll listen to thy pranks.

Some one tries to drag him away. He fling them off, throws his cap in the face of Ascanio, and sings:

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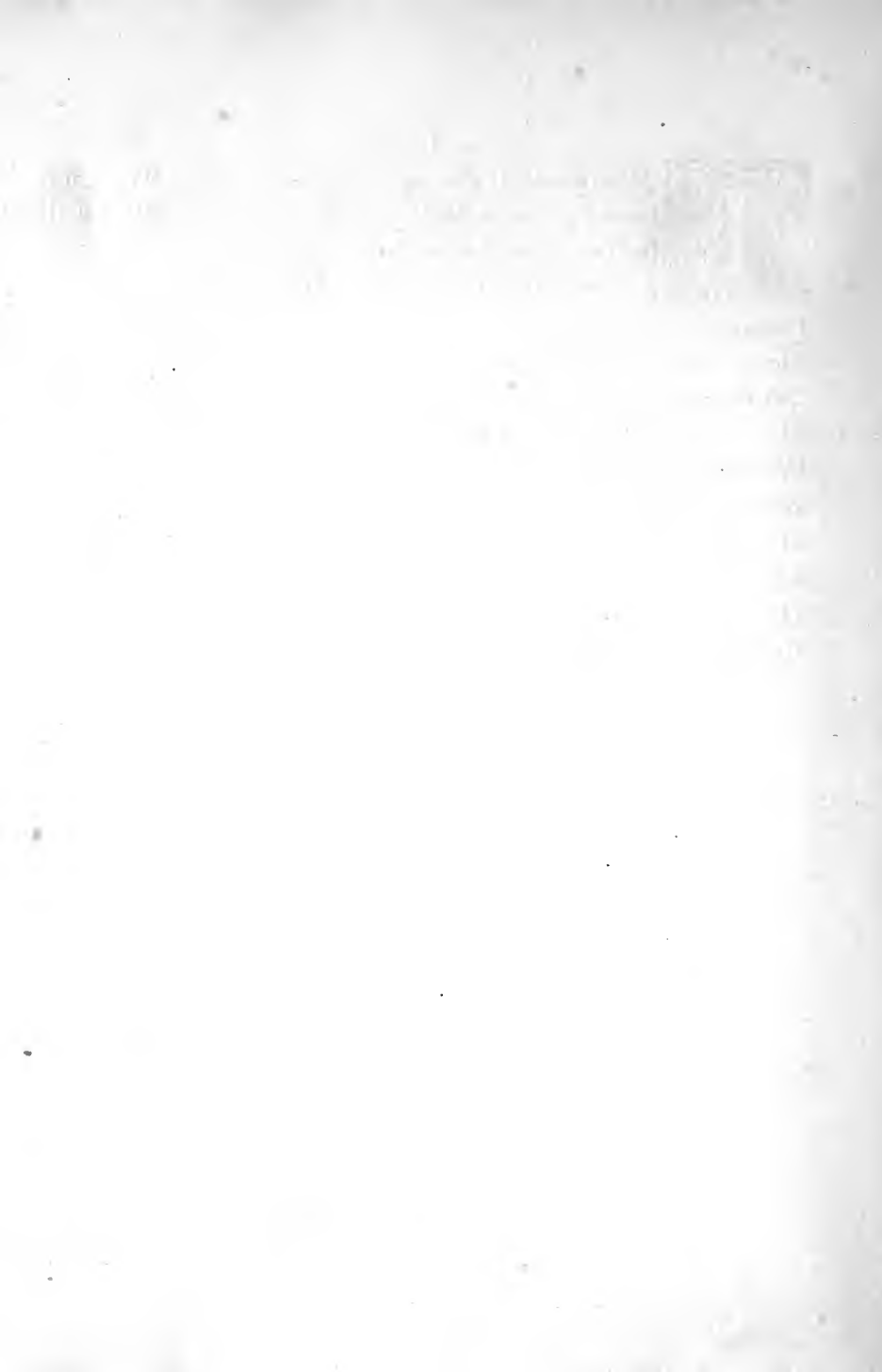
'M but a voice to thee!  
I'm but a voice to thee!  
Out from the vast of the deep,  
And down from the vast of the sky,

I fling my cry,  
Through the chambers of sleep.  
Oh! wake and hear, for love has come late,  
Time is old and the world is grey,  
Under thy window I stand and wait,  
Anear thee, love, till the dawn of day.  
The perfumed breath from the roses blown  
Is the incense I burn wherever thou art.  
I have made the voice of the winds my own,  
And the stars of the sky are the eyes of my heart.

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The company stands spellbound to the end. At first Lucrezia looks at him incredulously. Then a look of horror overspreads her face. She covers it with a silken scarf hanging from her girdle. Massimiliano ceases his song, stares at her in doubt as to the nature of her emotion, rushes up and tears the scarf from her face, and seeing there only hauteur and shame, reels back. A moment later the lords surge toward him, as if they would run him through. Massimiliano sees them, laughs and waves them back, darts forward, kisses Lucrezia upon the neck, and drawing a stillette from his belt, plunges it into his heart.

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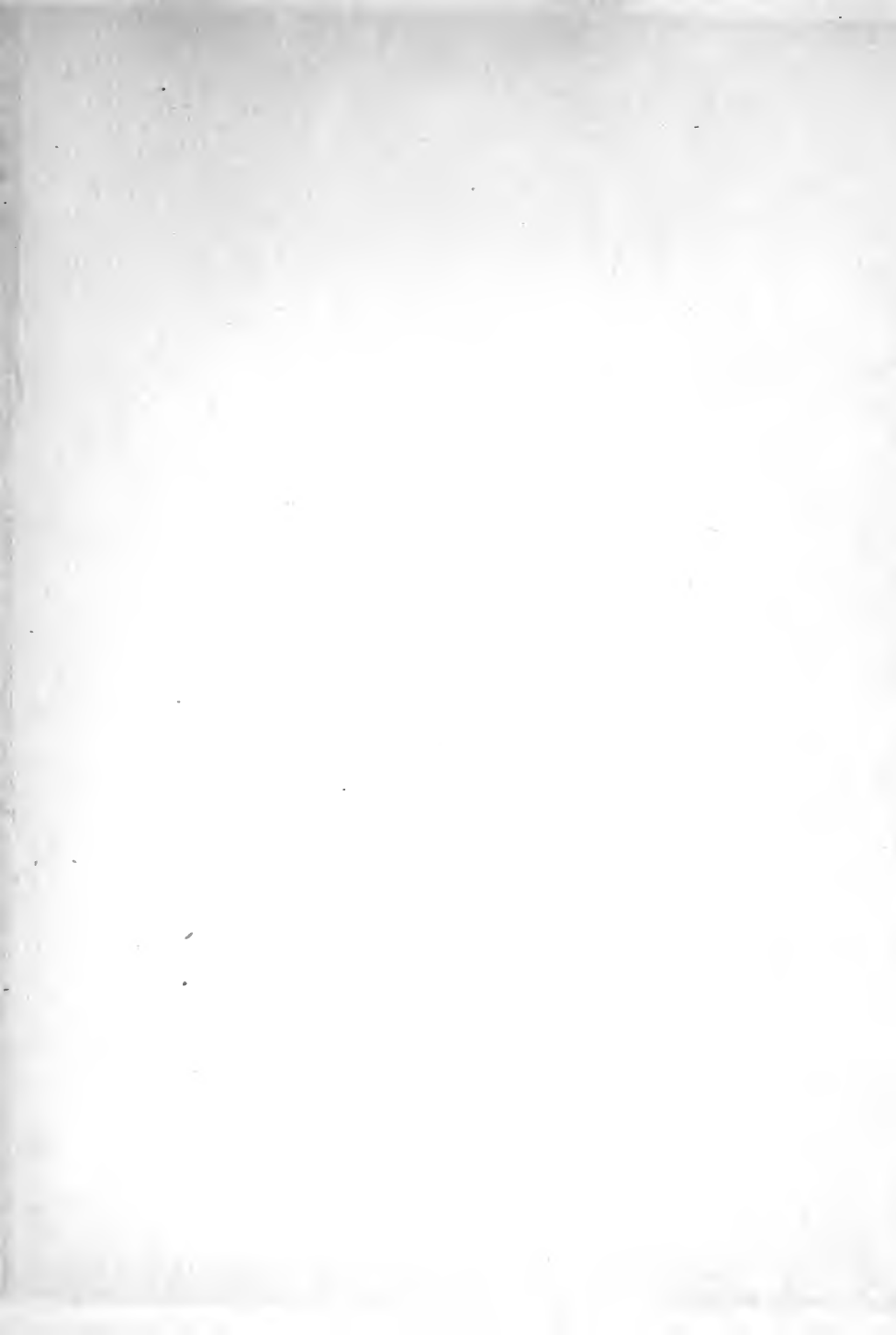


✂ And here, then, endeth the tale of the  
love of Massimilliano, the Fool, as set forth  
in rhyme & rhythm ✂ by Elia W. Peattie,  
and made into this book ✂ at the Philoso-  
pher Press ✂ which is in Wausau, ✂ ✂  
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